



Comptroller General  
of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20548

## Decision

**Matter of:** Aydin Corporation (West)

**File:** B-237450

**Date:** January 18, 1990

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### DIGEST

1. Agency properly rejected protester's proposal as technically unacceptable where the proposal offered to meet all required specifications but failed to provide sufficient detail of proposed unit's actual specifications and how it would meet the solicitation's requirements.

2. Even where a request for proposals provides that award will be made on the basis of the lowest-priced proposal meeting the requirements of the solicitation, an agency properly may evaluate an offeror's failure to provide sufficient detail to allow evaluators to determine whether the solicitation's requirements will be met, where the solicitation's instructions for preparation of proposals require such detail for that purpose.

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### DECISION

Aydin Corporation (West) protests the award to Applied Systems Engineering of a fixed-price contract under request for proposals (RFP) No. N60530-89-R-0290, issued by the Naval Weapons Center, China Lake, California. Aydin contends that its proposal was improperly evaluated and that it is entitled to the award as the low offeror.

We deny the protest.

This procurement is for the supply of radar simulator transmitters. A radar signal consists of a pulsed wave of energy whose shape is determined by its strength and by how quickly the signal turns on and off: the rise and fall times. Radar simulator transmitters are used by the Navy to imitate the "signature" of foreign radars to serve as targets for anti-radiation missiles. Offerors' transmitters were to be designed and constructed such that any one of five specified magnetrons could be installed without modification.

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The instructions for preparation of proposals, clause L-20 of the RFP, advised offerors to submit a "comprehensive statement of the offeror's understanding of the work required" and "the offeror's method of approach to attain contract objectives." Further, the technical approach was to be "developed in sufficient detail and appropriate style so that the technical evaluators can evaluate it thoroughly" and determine whether the requirements will be satisfied. Offerors also were advised that their technical proposals should be "specific, detailed, and complete enough" to demonstrate: the offeror's "understanding of the requirements" to achieve the described specifications; a "solid comprehension of the inherent technical problems;" and "a viable solution to these problems." The only evaluation criterion listed in section M of the RFP was that award would be made to the "responsible offeror proposing the lowest price" and "meeting the requirements of the solicitation."

Five offerors submitted proposals for the requirement including Aydin and Applied. The proposal of Applied, which had already delivered transmitters with the same specifications in two prior contracts, was evaluated as acceptable as proposed. Aydin's proposal, however, was evaluated as technically unacceptable for failing to provide sufficient detail regarding its compliance with the specifications. Of relevance to this protest was section 3.2.1.f of the statement of work which called for a "hard tube" modulator capable of producing, among other specifications, a radio frequency output rise time of less than 60 nanoseconds (ns) for the C Band magnetron and less than 30 ns for the higher frequency tubes, with fall times of less than 150 ns. The rate of rise of the magnetron cathode voltage was required to be adjustable over the range from 40 kilovolts per microsecond, to not greater than 250 kilovolts per microsecond.

Aydin had proposed a modified version of a Multiple Threat Emitter Simulator it was producing under contract for the Air Force, which had "nearly identical" specifications to those required by the Navy. With regard to the modulator, Aydin described the method by which its unit would produce pulses, but did not detail the means of attaining the desired speed of those pulses. It also explained that its triode grid would control "the pulse width, RFP pulse rise and fall times, and critical rate of rise of the magnetron cathode voltage" at the inception of oscillation voltage. Elsewhere, Aydin stated that the "modulator drive circuitry is adjustable to provide the required variable pulse width, RFP, and pulse rise and fall times."

In a request for best and final offer (BAFO), the Navy posed 11 questions to Aydin, 2 of which pertained to section 3.2.1.f. The first asked whether Aydin would provide a modulator performing to the requirements and if so, to "detail what type of Modulator and its functional capability." The second question asked that Aydin specify and detail pulse rise and fall times, pulse droops, and rate of rise of the cathode voltage.

Aydin identified its modulator as "essentially a Class C amplifier" and stated that it would perform to the requirements of the Navy's specifications. Aydin also referred the evaluators to its original proposal for functional capabilities. In response to the second question, Aydin replied it would comply with the stated specifications and added that "typical parameters, on similar transmitters" were a 50 ns rise time for C-Band tubes, 100 ns fall time with 4 percent droop, and a 160 kilovolt per microsecond rate of rise of cathode voltage, which was adjustable by controlling the grid voltage rate on the modulator tube.

The Navy found these responses unsatisfactory, particularly noting Aydin's failure to establish that it would meet the 30 ns rise time for higher frequency tubes. The Navy determined Aydin's proposal to be technically unacceptable and awarded the contract to Applied for \$545,790 for the minimum quantity and \$109,158 for each additional unit ordered. Aydin's price was \$545,937 for the minimum quantity and \$107,660 for each additional unit. After being notified of its rejection, Aydin filed a protest with our Office.

Aydin contends that its proposal was technically acceptable, since it promised to meet all specifications, and since it proposed the lowest price, the Navy improperly rejected it for lack of detail because "detail" was not part of the stated evaluation criteria (award to the lowest-priced offeror meeting the RFP's requirements). We disagree.

When an agency evaluation is challenged, we will examine that evaluation to ensure that it was reasonable and consistent with the evaluation criteria. The determination of the relative merits of a proposal is primarily a matter of administrative discretion which we will not disturb unless it is shown to be unreasonable. Wellington Assocs., Inc., B-228168.2, Jan. 28, 1988, 88-1 CPD ¶ 85.


Based upon our review of the record, we find that the Navy reasonably rejected Aydin's proposal as technically unacceptable. The RFP set forth specific requirements for performance and Aydin failed to establish that its unit

would meet them either in its original proposal or in its BAFO responses to the Navy's questions. We agree with the Navy that where it had requested details of Aydin's modulator functional capability, Aydin's simple reference to its original proposal was unacceptable. Likewise, we agree that Aydin's promise to meet all stated specifications with regard to rise and fall times, coupled with an enumeration of less than all those specifications, and denomination of them as "typical parameters, on similar transmitters," did not establish that Aydin's unit would meet the Navy's specified requirements. It is an offeror's obligation to establish that what it proposes will meet the government's needs, and where a proposal fails to include technical information called for by the RFP, which is necessary to establish compliance with the specifications, the agency may reasonably find that proposal technically unacceptable. Inter-Continental Equip., Inc., B-224244, Feb. 5, 1987, 87-1 CPD ¶ 122. Aydin's responses were tantamount to a blanket offer of compliance which is not an adequate substitute for the detailed and complete technical information necessary to establish that what the firm proposes will meet the agency's needs. IPEC Advanced Sys., B-232145, Oct. 20, 1988, 88-2 CPD ¶ 380.

We are unpersuaded by Aydin's argument that a blanket offer of compliance was sufficient to establish technical acceptability. Although the evaluation criterion of section M of the RFP was stated solely in terms of award to be made to the lowest priced offeror meeting the solicitation's requirements, the agency is entitled to require sufficient detail to establish that the requirements would be met. Here, the RFP set forth specific instructions for proposal preparation in section L-20 which included a requirement that proposals be sufficiently detailed to allow the agency to evaluate proposals thoroughly. Aydin was not entitled to ignore those instructions. A solicitation should be read as a whole and, whenever reasonably possible, effect must be given to each word or clause. See Cerberonics, Inc., B-220910, Mar. 5, 1986, 86-1 CPD ¶ 221. Thus, the agency was entitled to evaluate Aydin's proposal

on the basis of whether it provided sufficient detail to establish compliance with the RFP's requirements and, finding a lack of detail, properly rejected Aydin as technically unacceptable.

Accordingly, the protest is denied.

  
James F. Hinchman  
General Counsel